

NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program

Removal Case Study: *M/V Lian Gi 598*

Contributing Agency: CNMI Office of Coastal Resources Management



OVERVIEW

VESSEL

<i>Dimensions:</i>	45' x 129'	<i>Hull:</i>	Steel
<i>Type:</i>	Freighter	<i>Tonnage:</i>	100-300

SITE

<i>Name:</i>	Tinian Harbor
<i>Location:</i>	Tinian Island, CNMI
<i>Coordinates:</i>	14 57.918'N 145 37.071'E (dock) 14 55.00'N 146 00.00' E (scuttled)
<i>Land:</i>	Commonwealth Port Authority



INCIDENT & REMOVAL

<i>Situation:</i>	Ill prepared owner – poor maintenance
<i>Incident Date:</i>	January 2003 (initial warning notice)
<i>Total Duration:</i>	2 months, Jan. '03 – Sept. 4, '03
<i>Actual Operations:</i>	1 month – testing and removal of contaminated ballast and water 2 Days – Demolition and scuttling
<i>Cost:</i>	\$137,000 – cleaning vessel + Personnel time for all agencies including demolition team and demolition equipment
<i>Funding:</i>	Consolidated Transport Services Incorporated
<i>Agencies Involved:</i>	CNMI CRM, CNMI Division of Environmental Quality, Commonwealth Port Authority, USCG, US Navy Explosive Ordinance Disposal Team
<i>Non-Government:</i>	Seafix Inc., South Pacific Environmental LLC, AMPRO Inc.
<i>Primary Threats:</i>	Public Safety, Environment, Navigation

DETAILS

VESSEL, HISTORY & INCIDENT

NOAA AVP #: 2577

The M/V Lian Gi was brought to Saipan smuggling illegal immigrants from China in 2001. The vessel was confiscated by the US Coast Guard and then sold by the US Marshals to a local shipping company, Consolidated Transport Services, Inc. CTSI intended to refurbish the vessel and use it to move into cargo transport with a route between Saipan and Tinian. They brought the vessel to Tinian Harbor in October 2001. After this CTSI quickly realized that they had underestimated both repair costs and the potential market for the cargo run. The vessel was not repaired, the cargo run never went into operation and the vessel continued to deteriorate at the dock in Tinian. By the end of 2002 the owner was in arrears of moorage fees and the local agencies were concerned about the vessel.

The vessel was moored near rich coral resources. It also posed a slip-fall, entrapment hazard to the public and, if sunk in a storm, may have blocked shipping access to the island.

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INCIDENT RESPONSE & SALVAGE OPERATIONS

Contractor: Seafix, Inc. & South Pacific Environmental
Authority: CNMI Public Law 3-47

Fuel and engine room contamination were addressed by CTSI, in 2002 when the Commonwealth Port Authority expressed concern about the state of the vessel and the potential of a hazardous release during a severe storm. At this time, the owners also hired a tug company to tow the vessel to Manila to be scrapped. Once they surveyed the vessel, however, the operator deemed the vessel unseaworthy and refused the job.

In January 2003, the Office of Coastal Resource Management posted a warning of initial enforcement. This warning motivated the owners to begin the process of cleaning and removing the vessel. The owners retained Seafix who in turn contracted with South Pacific Environmental to clean up the vessel. By this point the primary concern was oil contaminated ballast sand that was infiltrated with water. 20 cubic yards of sand and 4500 gallons of oily water were removed. The sand was put in barrels, loaded in a container and shipped for cleanup in spring 2003.

DISPOSAL OPERATIONS

Contractor: AMPRO, Navy EOD & Burlington Environmental, Inc.
Authority: The Ocean Dumping Act, 40 CFR Parts 220 to 229
Permits: EPA Ocean Disposal Permit

The Abandoned Vessel Program surveyed the vessel in June 2003 and designated the vessel as a high priority for removal. At that time there weren't even tentative removal plans. During the summer CTSI began discussions with AMPRO about scuttling the vessel. In order to save money AMPRO suggested involving the Navy Explosive Ordinance Disposal team. The EOD agreed to sink the vessel as a training exercise, but required the vessel be publicly owned. The CPA confiscated the vessel. The EOD arrived on scene and, once the vessel was towed offshore, scuttled the vessel. The US EPA issued an Ocean Disposal Permit for the action and specified the location, a designated ocean dumping site.

The contaminated sediment and oily water were shipped to a Burlington Environmental facility in Washington state for remediation.

LESSONS LEARNED

Clear regulatory authority is critical for clear efficient and effective action.

At two points during this process there were uncertainties surrounding the actions that the agencies took and whether they truly had the necessary authority. In the case of the Lian Gi, the owners were responsible and cooperative. If they had been recalcitrant then the operation could have been delayed significantly while regulatory details were ironed out.

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Vessel at dock in Tinian Harbor



Aerial photo of harbor and region



Contaminated ballast in barrels



Vessel in tow to disposal site

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